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ABSTRACT

The authors survey the lifelong process of education and focus on certain issues enhancing or inhibiting learning. They summarize their conclusions in the following six points: (1) at all age levels learning programs of varying kinds need to be developed to fit students of varying learning styles and teachers of varying teaching styles; (2) these programs should allow for observing, sampling, and debate between both faculty and students; (3) interaction between students and teachers of varying styles can develop respect for the human uniqueness of both; (4) broadened work-study programs and available low interest loans will further youth's transition to adulthood through financial independence; (5) broadened merit scholarships without regard to parents' financial status will encourage many students; and (6) learning as a life-long process focuses on identity, independence, social and personal intimacy as well as facts and skills. (Author)

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EDUCATION: INTEREST AND MERIT VS. COERCION AND DOLE; CURIOSITY VS. "MOTIVATION"

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INTRODUCTION

Our purpose is to survey the lifelong process of education and focus on certain issues enhancing or inhibiting learning. These issues include motivation, emotional atmosphere, curriculum, financial support, philosophy of teaching. It is our premise that learning occurs as a result of innate curiosity and drive to mastery. Innate curiosity and drive to mastery make up internal or intrinsic motivation. Internal motivation has inner satisfaction as its goal. External or extrinsic motivation is that applied from the outside to stimulate interest - usually after it has been deadened by coercion or fear - often with a goal of external reward. Whatever preserves and encourages innate curiosity and drive to mastery enhances learning. Whatever restricts, imposes direction, applies external manipulation or interrupts and demands attention or coerces inhibits learning. We will consider these influences as they act on learning stages from preschool through continuing adult education.

AGE LEVEL LEARNING STAGES

PRESCHOOL

The operation of internal or intrinsic motivation is best seen in the drive of the toddler to explore, experience and learn about his world. His learning atmosphere is his family climate. If the atmosphere is one of acceptance, joy, cuddling, and expectation of exciting development, the child can explore with confidence while a friendly caretaker watches for major dangers and deftly removes him from them. If the atmosphere is one of fear, distance, reluctance, prediction of disaster and trouble-making

with emphasis on restriction, don't touch, hand slapping, the child becomes fearful of touching and exploring and learns to stay in a small space but sacrifices many learning experiences.

I once observed a child taken out of a playpen by an older sister. As the child was gleefully stepping out as her sister held her hands, the mother appeared on the scene. "Oh, no!" she exclaimed, "now you've done it! I'll never be able to get her to stay in the playpen again!"

A child may be allowed and encouraged to put on his own clothing even if backwards or can be taught to wait and "Let mother do it!" He can be encouraged to do it himself or taught he doesn't do it well enough.

The "no" stage at two years of age can be recognized by parents as a vital development of independence, separation from mother and beginning of identity or may be vigorously put down as stubbornness or "cussedness." Selma Fraiberg,[8] child analyst, aptly titles the chapter in her book dealing with this stage, "The Missionaries Arrive" and states:

> "Too much pressure or forceful methods of control from the outside can change the 'declaration of independence' in the second year of life into a 'full-scale rebellion' with 'fierce defiance, tantrums, and all the fireworks of revolt in the nursery.'"

One child I have seen reacted to coercion in toilet training to learn to put his BM's down the radiator in his home. Another whose father decided to break him of withholding BM's by beating him with a

belt became incontinent and a soiler.

Another early learning experience is that the child can give himself pleasurable feelings by handling his genitals. This can be considered by parents evidence of normal development which promotes independence and sense of self or met with fear of future sexual problems and anxious restrictions.

A child entering the "Question" stage around 4 can be answered by his parents to the best of their knowledge, sometimes with "I don't know" or "Let's look it up or ask someone else." Or he may be answered, "Why don't you go play with your toys. I'm busy now."

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Elementary School is the child's first experience with formal schooling. Usually he follows a curriculum devised by adults. He shifts from subject to subject by the clock not by his own interest.

Various educators have emphasized the importance of the child's self-directed learning through experience and the importance of the teacher's being sensitive to the child's ideas and differences and not interfering with his natural abilities and creativity.

Ralph Rabinovitch,[13] known for his work with learning and reading disabilities, states:

> "In order to acquire academic learning most effectively, the child must participate actively and must be free to invest appropriate psychic energy in his schooling experience."

Lawrence Kubie,[11] eminent psychoanalyst who has written extensively on Blocks to Creativity states:

"We do not need to be taught to think. In fact, thinking cannot be taught. The function of education is rather to show us how not to interfere with the thinking capacity which is inherent in the human mind."

He further finds the thinking apparatus is "braked and driven off course by conventional educational processes" such as "drill and grill."

Bob Bland,[3] Director of Merrill-Palmer's Skillman Center, exhorts us to be open to children's suggestions and receptive to their differences if we hope for them to grow in a way to improve a change in society.

A. S. Neill,[12] headmaster of the English School Summerhill and author of the book by that name is one of the most out-spoken proponents of self-regulation for children. He divides children into Free and Unfree. He claims free children, who may even decide whether or not to attend any class, are able to master in two years, when they decide to do it, the work that a child in the regular system takes 8 years to cover. He sees unfree children as disciplined, repressed, sitting at a dull desk in a dull school and moving on to sit at a duller desk in an office or a factory assembly line.

Erich Fromm[9] in his forward to "Summerhill," finds important principles underlying Neill's work. Neill has faith in the basic goodness of the child. The aim of life is to work joyfully and find happiness by being interested in life. Education must be both intellectual and emotional and thrives in an atmosphere of sincerity and mutual respect for pupil and teacher. For full development a child must cut his ties

to his parents and move into the world.

In the past decade many experimental courses and efforts to individualize teaching have developed across the country to put into practice some of the above principals.

However, recently a backlash has occurred and some parents backed by psychologists and educators as well as school boards are insisting on a return to traditional education with old math, reading drill in phonics, vigorous homework assignments and strict dress and conduct codes for students and teachers. Some parents are removing their children from public schools to more structured parochial schools. Cornell University professor Urie Bronfrenbrenner returned from observing schools in the Peoples Republic of China impressed that "classes are large, it's all repetition and memory - and its quite clear that children are learning how to read, write, stand tall and be happy."[2]

My experience with over-trained children is not that they stand tall and are happy. They sit quiet and stiff. I see one family of five school age children I recently tried to free up by having them play on an African drum. With their mother's permission each in turn marched to the drum tapped it timidly and went back to his or her seat.

The venture away from home to the elementary school is an important step toward independence. Social learning occurs through experiences with other children and new authorities, the teachers, principal, janitor and lunch room workers.

MIDDLE OR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Students at this level invest much of their energy in non-academic

learning. They invest energy in learning to get used to their body changes and in social learning, especially in developing close relationships with friends of their own sex and the opposite sex.

Formerly compliant children become resistant and sample experiences which are peer-approved and not parent-approved. Parents may fight to keep such children attending extra-curricular activities such as musical instrument lessons or dancing lessons which no longer fit the young person's interests. I have advised parents to take up the activity themselves and let the young person follow his own interests. Some schools set aside special hours for unusual elective courses such as photography, chess, pop music.

Students increase their social learning and independence by finding their way around larger schools with a variety of classes taught by different teachers.

Parents may expect the students to be responsible for their own getting up, getting to school and doing assignments; or parents may be over-involved with each step and encourage students to be less responsible and more dependent.

HIGH SCHOOL

High school students have increasing freedom of movement but also are more aware of the coercion of the law to remain in school until 16. Students may be present in class in body but not in spirit. They often direct their energies toward social relations with classmates.

To combat the disinterest, schools have diversified their programs.

Students can elect honors courses, centralized special courses and apply for advanced placement in college. Centralized special schools such as Ed Park[6] in Grand Rapids, Michigan, offer an increasing number of courses to students of 14 different high schools both public and private.

Grand Rapids, Michigan, Public Schools have also made a study of "disaffiliated" students.[14] These students have been so named to avoid the negative connotation of "drop out." They have been studied as consultants to determine what changes in the school system might be made to give them a more meaningful, successful, and enjoyable learning experience.

Arising from this study has been a new Alternative City School which opened September, 1974. This school utilizes volunteer teachers from the community and placement of students in work-observor positions with various community agencies and professional workers. Students also take some regular classes at community high schools.

Another recommendation which has not yet been accepted by the School Board is the recognition of the students' decision to leave school for an experimental "Year in Life" for which he could receive school credit by maintaining contact with a counselor.

Another example of alternative secondary schools which have developed in cities across the country is that at Scarsdale, New York[1] which opened in 1972 after two years of educational community planning involving teachers, administrators, students, and parents. The school provides greater responsibility of the student for his own learning; use of learning

resources of the New York Area, use of community resource people, agencies, and institutions; greater involvement of the student in evaluation of his own experiences; a variety of learning methods, classes, seminars, workshops, independent studies and,especially, field projects. The Superintendent of Schools reports enthusiasm of pupils, parents, and teachers who have participated most closely in the program, but some shifting toward "pursuing traditional academic studies in a more personal supportive setting and in a more independent manner."

Quincy, Il., is experimenting with seven high school choices: "A liberal open-classroom program for highly motivated learners; a staunchly traditional section for those who thrive on structure, and a 'Flexible School' for those who fall somewhere in between . . . a school of fine arts for students whose talents run to music, painting, or theater - and plenty of opportunity for them to take basic academic courses as well . . . a career school, with impressive facilities for the study of nursing, computer programming, child care, business, and automobile mechanics."[2]

The Coleman Committee Report[15] finds that present schools retard the transition of youth to adulthood by monopolizing their time for narrow objectives of cognitive learning and work skill acquisition. The committee proposes several pilot projects to combat the isolation of youth from the adult world and its productive work, youth's minimal inter-relationship with those of other ages and backgrounds, their lack of intense self-motivated concentration and lack of management of their own affairs. Among these proposals are work-study programs, Public Service programs and educational vouchers for youth at 16.

The proposal of educational vouchers,[10,15] is a novel and drastic way to put power of choice into the hands of 16 year olds and to extend that choice over a lifetime. The value of the voucher is to be equal to four years of college and may be used to obtain schooling or training at any subsequent time or added to social security at retirement. Dissenting opinions show fear that "youth or their families" are often incapable to make such choices.

COLLEGE OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

Recently, there has been a movement to bring education closer to the student and to reduce its cost. Two year Community or Junior Colleges have increased in number. Also alternative programs at college and post-graduate levels are becoming increasingly popular. Credit is given for off-campus courses, life experiences, and non-academic learning by examination and internships. Many students can remain in their jobs and study for higher degrees or specialized training. Colleges are cooperating in consortia to give students a wider selection of courses.

There is a trend toward specific training for technical jobs such as nursing, practical nursing, operating room technician, medical assistant, auto mechanic, auto body repair, dental assistant, dental hygienist, and many others.

Colleges are recognizing students' option to leave school for a period of time by making readmission easier. Students may take a year or two between high school and college or often after two years of college.[15]

K. Patricia Cross[5] proposes educating students in three areas vital

to jobs and to humane life in our society. These skills are "specific knowledge, interpersonal skills, and the ability to work with things." She believes each individual should develop his greatest talent to excellence but also learn minimum competence in the other two areas no matter how much time is required. She envisions students tutoring one another. This program would recognize the status of other areas of skill in contrast to the present focus on academic achievement.

The present Financial Aid program based on need has been beneficial to lower economic class students. However, middle economic class students have decreased in college enrollment disproportionately in comparison to lower and upper economic class students.[7] The present need basis for determination of Financial Aid has discriminated against children of financially successful parents. These students may well be best able to benefit from college education. The Admissions Testing Program of the College Entrance Examination Board reports a positive correlation between income of parent and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of the student.[4]

The present system forces young adults whose goal is to find independence to be financially dependent upon their parents. It puts parents through the harassment of filling out Parents' Confidential Statements when their students will be disappointed and discouraged by being declared inelligible for aid.

However, this past fall, both the College Scholarship Service and the Federal Government (Basic Educational Opportunity Grants) have extended eligibility for middle class students. Also states and colleges are beginning to award merit grants without regard to parents' income.[7]

ADULT CONTINUING OR LIFE-LONG EDUCATION

Many adults are returning to college to finish up degrees, retool or retread themselves or for personal enrichment. Some are finding new careers after raising families or years in one type of job. Colleges are cooperating by offering refresher courses and varying schedules to make courses available timewise. Adults get much out of the experience and most likely benefit from self-determination and interest in selecting their courses.

DISCUSSION

Theoretically freedom to explore and investigate in an accepting atmosphere would be expected to give a child optimum learning experience and expression of creativity. Actually, children are brought up in family systems which vary widely in methods of educating children. These children vary in their ability to benefit by various programs available. Education of the future must make available alternate programs which are most effective for students having different learning styles. A range of programs will satisfy not only different types of students but also their parents and teachers who prefer to teach in a more or less strictly structured program.

At all age levels there are students who learn best in an unstructured situation. There are also teachers who prefer to be open to students interests. They prefer to learn with their students, to be resource people and co-investigators. They enjoy intimate discussions

with students. At the opposite end of the scale are formal learners and lecturers who thrive on organized material transmitted in an orderly atmosphere without a demand for intimacy. In between are a number of different life and learning styles.

Some students are ready to use the community as an extended learning laboratory and to learn life as it is lived and work as it is practiced. These students can be expected to benefit from an alternative school experience, a work-study experience or a period away from school altogether.

Other students may need an escape from the pressures of school and use time away to restore their energies or find a new direction.

If varying programs are made available at all age levels and the student is given the opportunity to choose freely, this may be expected to increase his academic or skill learning. However, if he is allowed to observe and sample other programs and relate with students and teachers of other learning styles, he may well have a broadening and humanizing experience. Students and teachers will learn to value one another's human uniqueness.

The child moving through all stages of education learns much more than facts and skills. He learns his own identity and gradually establishes his independence and becomes responsible for himself and others. He learns social relationships and personal intimate relationships. Much of his learning is experiential. Hopefully, he learns to "transform each moment of his living into one of learning, sharing, and caring."[10]

SUMMARY

1. At all age levels learning programs of varying kinds need to be developed to fit students of varying learning styles and teachers of varying teaching styles.
2. These programs should allow for observing, sampling, and debate between both faculty and students of the varying systems.
3. Interaction between students and teachers of varying styles can develop respect for the human uniqueness of each.
4. Broadened Work-Study programs and available low interest loans will further youth's transition to adulthood through financial independence from parents.
5. Broadened merit or talent scholarships without regard to parents' financial status will encourage many students.
6. Learning is life-long and includes identity, independence, social and personal intimacy as well as facts and skills.

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